

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ OK

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10/25/75

Dear Harold,

Jerry has had copies of the tapes that were made during Wecht's conferences with his own panel of critics when he was in Wash. to look at pix and X-rays. In connection with my piece for NEW TIMES, he sent me dubs that he had a friend make. They are not very clear, and usually only Wecht is intelligible. Hard to tell who is there: Lifton, Gary and Bob Smith for sure. I think Lesar might be some of the time. As best as I can tell there was one meeting (long) in his hotel room the first night, after his first day of exam, and then one mid-day during the second day. I'm pretty sure Bud is at the second one. Jerry has not yet listened to the tapes (he was not there) but plans to this weekend.

In general, they reveal how stupid and uninformed Wecht is and how poorly advised he was. However, there are some things of particular interest to us, and as for now I have to ask this be confidential, at least till I check with Jerry to find out who sent him the tapes and under what restrictions.

First, at the first conference, Wecht is asked where the back wound was, was it really at the 3rd thoracic? He says that it appears to be in the vicinity of the 3rd thoracic and then goes into this bit, to the effect "I don't know what Weisberg is so uptight about" because the 3rd thoracic isn't that low down on the back and the bullet could even have entered there downward and still exited from the neck. At a later point he says the bullet could have gone above the first rib or between the space between two ribs, that the pictures aren't definitive. He also later says that perhaps the 3rd thoracic is too low a designation "a little low." As I heard all this I looked at the sketch he included in that journal piece he did with Smith. Sure enough, there he locates the wound real close to the neck, above the first rib. Some honesty!!

Then, there is something of interest on the tape apparently made during lunch the following day. Here is a rough transcript:

WECHT: I just don't want no fuckin' discussion about any of this with Harold Weisberg. Because I...uh...I don't like to...I got enough areas of controversy in my life and I never for one moment expected that I would get involved in controversy within the ranks of the people with whom I've been working. But if you could--well, I think you did see--the letters from Weisberg, and Jerry's got his own letters and then that letter from Roffman, I think--do you have the letter from Roffman?

(Response unintelligible)

WECHT: You see, I can do without this. I'm a little too big of a boy to receive a letter from a punk kid like that, you know, 18 year old snotty nose kid...

(unintelligible discussion follows for less than 30 seconds)

WECHT: I'd just as soon fuck 'em. Let 'em sit and stew. And if they don't want anything from us now...now, I mean actually--let me say this. Substantively I don't feel for one moment that I'm depriving them of any (unintelligible) but that it's just gonna gall the shit out of them, cause they're gonna, you know, where did he get sucked in...screwed...next 25 years or so. That's my little bit of

personal pressure, well, I want the two of them to schvitz a little bit, OK?

(Someone else begins to speak, Wecht interrupts--)

WECHT: You guys are sworn to secrecy if you get inquiries from Weisberg or uh, OK? Anybody else I don't give a shit.

There is another discussion later at this same conference which unfortunately is too garbled to transcribe, but it again concerns us. It begins with a sarcastic reference to you by Wecht, to the effect, "What's he working on now, Whitewash 103?" There is some discussion to the effect no one will publish your books. Then Wecht asks ~~XXXX~~ what is the story with Roffman? What the hell is in his book? He says everybody has been telling him Roffman is the only who knows anything about the medical evidence, Sylvia lavishes praise, Jerry and Bernabei--what's he got? I think Lifton answers at this point and refers to Tink's review for U. of P. Press, saying that the book apparently makes a lot of charges but is meticulous and well documented and has some important stuff on the bullets and fragments. I think someone else comes in, someone with a deeper voice than Lifton's, more calm sounding, and says that he thinks what I've probably done is rewrite what Weisberg has, take Weisberg's material and put it in readable form (not true, incidently, even in the first draft--HR). Much of this is unintelligible, and it ends with Wecht, I believe, saying something like, "well, just forget about it."

Watergate tapes II? I thought you'd be interested in this.

Best,

Howard
Howard